

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 126TH SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION
(2006-2010) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD
AT 2.00 P.M.
ON THURSDAY, 15TH JULY, 2010
IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, GEORGETOWN

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (70)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S.C., M.P., Speaker of the National Assembly

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (41)

People's Progressive Party/Civic (40)

The United Force (1)

The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P. (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),
Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Absent – performing the
functions of Office of President)

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P., Minister of Education

The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
Minister of Health

The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, M.P. (Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo),
Minister of Foreign Affairs

*The Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P., Minister of Finance

The Hon. Robert M. Persaud, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
Minister of Agriculture

/...2

***Non-elected Minister**

2.

The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni),
Minister of Public Service

The Hon. Kellawan Lall, M.P., Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

*The Hon. Charles R. Ramson, S.C., M.P., Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon. Dr. Frank C.S. Anthony, M.P., Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon. B. H. Robeson Benn, M.P., Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P., Minister of Labour

The Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P. (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice),
Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon. Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Health (Absent – on leave)

The Hon. Jennifer I. Webster, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Finance

The Hon. Manniram Prashad, M.P., Minister of Tourism, Industry
and Commerce (Absent – on leave)

*The Hon. Pauline Sukhai, M.P., Minister of Amerindian Affairs (Absent – on leave)

The Hon. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, M.P., Minister of Housing and Water (Absent – on leave)

Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Ms Gail Teixeira, M.P.

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal, M.P., Chief Whip

Mr. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P.

Ms Bibi S. Shadick, M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Mr. Albert A. Atkinson, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 8 – Potaro/Siparuni)

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***Non-Elected Minister**

****Elected Member from the United Force**

3.

Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Mr. Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Shirley V. Edwards, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Mohamed F. Khan, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supernaam)

Mr. Moses V. Nagamootoo, J.P., M.P.

Mr. Mohabir A. Nandlall, M.P.

Mr. Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.

Mr. Neendkumar, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

***Mr. Steve P. Ninvalle, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

Mr. Parmanand P. Persaud, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supernaam)

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.

Mr. Norman A. Whittaker, M.P. (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo, M.P.

Rev. Kwame Gilbert, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Mr. Lloyd J. Pereira, J.P., M.P.

Members of the Opposition (28)

(i) Members of People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana (22)

Mr. Robert Corbin, M.P., Leader of the Opposition (Absent – on leave)

Mr. Winston Murray, C.C.H., M.P.

***Non-elected Parliamentary Secretary

4.

Mrs. Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P., Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.

Mr. Basil Williams, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Dr. George A. Norton, M.P.

Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Mr. Keith Scott, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Ms Amna Ally, M.P.

Ms Cheryl Sampson, M.P.

Mr. Dave Danny, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Aubrey C. Norton, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent – on leave)

Mr. Ernest Barnabas Elliot, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Judith David-Blair, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Mervyn Williams, M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara) (Absent)

Ms Africo Selman, M.P.

Dr. John Austin, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms Jennifer Wade, M.P. (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)

Ms. Vanessa Kisson, M.P. (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice)

Mr. Desmond Fernandes, M.P. (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

Ms Dawn Hastings, M.P. (Absent)

5.

(ii) Alliance for Change (5)

Mr. Raphael G.C. Trotman, M.P.

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Mrs. Latchmin Punalall, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. David Patterson, M.P.

Guyana Action Party/Rise Organize and Rebuild (1)

Mr. Everall N. Franklin, M.P.

OFFICERS (2)

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs. Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

COMMENCEMENT OF SITTING

The sitting commenced at 2.10 p.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read Prayers.

6.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Statement by Mrs. Volda Lawrence, M.P. in the Kaieteur Newspaper

The Speaker of the National Assembly made the following statement:

“Mrs. Volda Lawrence published a statement in the Kaieteur Newspaper of Monday, 12th July, 2010 under the heading “Delay in issuing Treasury Memorandum illustrates Minister’s contempt” in which the Hon. Member asserted that the Treasury Memorandum has not yet been laid by the Minister of Finance.

I wish to state that the statement by Mrs. Lawrence is not accurate. The Treasury Memorandum was lodged with the Clerk of the National Assembly on the 14th July, 2010. Today being the first sitting since that date, the Treasury Memorandum could not be laid before.

I wish to advise Members that the Clerk of the National Assembly and the Parliament Office are always available to clarify all issues and enquiries relating to the business of the National Assembly. Members of Parliament are encouraged and advised to seek clarification on information about such business before making public assertions or accusations.”

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS-

By the Minister of Finance:

- (i) Treasury Memorandum pursuant to Resolution No. 114 dated March 11, 2010 of the National Assembly adopting the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Public Accounts of Guyana for the years 2004 and 2005.

(Circulated)

7.

- (ii) The Petroleum (Exploration and Production) (Tax Laws) (YPF Guyana Ltd., formerly Maxus Guyana Ltd.) Order 2010 – Order No. 9 of 2010.
(Circulated)
- (iii) The Petroleum (Exploration and Production) (Tax Laws) (CGX Resources Inc.) Order 2010 – Order No. 10 of 2010.
(Circulated)
- (iv) The Petroleum (Exploration and Production) (Tax Laws) (Canacol Energy (Guyana) Inc., formerly Groundstar Resources Inc.) Order 2010 – Order No. 11 of 2010.
(Circulated)
- (v) The Constitutional Offices (Remuneration of Holders) Order 2010 – Order No. 16 of 2010.
(Circulated)
- (vi) Agreement on National Micro Credit Programme; Women of Worth (WOW) Facility.
(Circulated)
- (vii) Revised Low Carbon Development Strategy dated May, 2010 – Transforming Guyana’s Economy while Combating Climate Change.
(Circulated)

8.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES-

By Ms Gail Teixeira, M.P. (Chairperson of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services):

- (i) The Fifth Periodic Report of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services.

(Circulated)

- (ii) Eighth Report of the Committee on Appointments in relation to the Appointment of Members of the Indigenous Peoples' Commission.

(Circulated)

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE-

For Written Replies

1. PRIVITISATION OF GUYANA POWER AND LIGHT

Member Asking: Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communication

Can the Honourable Prime Minister state what efforts Government proposes to take to privatise Guyana Power Light and save the taxpayers the huge sums that are transferred each year to that utility?

(Notice Paper No. 442 (Q321 Opp296) published on 2010-03-05)

Answer:

“The transfer to GPL are really transfers to the consumers, in that these transfers offsetting say increases in fuel prices, and the provision of financing at very concessionary rates, make for tariffs that are lower than they otherwise would have been. In addition, the Government has been foregoing any return on its equity in GPL which the typical private investor could not do.

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9.

Privatizing the GPL at this time will either have to be at a give-away price or will be accompanied by a 25 to 50% increase in tariff with GPL in private ownership to provide a commercial return on the purchase price.

This Government has not approached privatization from an ideological point of view but from the pragmatic question of whether privatization in the given circumstances would from overall consideration be better for Guyanese than not privatizing.

When the Electricity Utility was privatized in 1999, the objectives were to firstly bring GPL to an adequate condition, with a strategic core partner, then after 10 years, for both partners to sell down their shareholdings equally to the wide public in Guyana. It was considered very important, to get to the point where members of every customer household were in both positions, of owner, holding some amount of shares in GPL and as customer paying regular bills for electricity consumed. This I continue to see as a great learning experience for our people, an opportunity to grow and develop in many ways.

It may be recalled that on the departure of the core partner of GPL in 2003, local financial institutions were invited to step in without success. However, the subsequent successful invitation to local financial institutions to participate in the establishment of the Berbice River Bridge, has brought the hope that an invitation to take shares in GPL at an appropriate time in the future may be better received.”

2. SETTING UP OF SEVERAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONS

Member Asking: Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communication

Can the Honourable Prime Minister say why is there no provision in the 2010 Budget for the setting up of the secretariat to facilitate the work of the several Right Commissions?

(Notice Paper No. 443 (Q322 Opp297) published on 2010-03-05)

Answer:

Provision was made in 2009 for all of the Commissions to be housed together with the Ethnic Relations Commission in the former BIDCO building in Queenstown. To that end the Integrity Commission was removed and has been relocated elsewhere.

Government would seek supplementary provision(s) as required on the establishment of the Commissions, to meet the work programmes envisaged.

3. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL PROCUREMENT COMMISSION

Member Asking: Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

Will the Honourable Prime Minister provide a status report on the failure to establish the National Procurement Commission?

(Notice Paper No. 444 (Q323 Opp298) published on 2010-03-05)

Answer:

Government has had the establishment of the National Procurement Commission on hold whilst seeking political consensus on its establishment.

4. VIDEO TAPING OF PROCEEDINGS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Member Asking: Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

11.

The proceedings in the National Assembly are video-taped by the Government controlled NCN. Will the Honourable Prime Minister say why copies of the parliamentary proceedings are not being made available to the Alliance For Change parliamentary party upon request?

(Notice Paper No. 445 (Q324 Opp299) published on 2010-03-05)

Answer:

The Prime Minister believes that copies of any of NCN programmes are available on usual commercial terms and arrangements.

5. NATIONAL SPORTS COMMISSION

Member Asking: Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Will the Honourable Minister say why is money being voted for the National Sports Commission, a body that has been defunct for more than two years?

(Notice Paper No. 446 (Q325 Opp300) published on 2010-03-05)

Answer:

Monies are voted for the National Sports Commission to enable it to pay its staff and carry out programmes.

6. DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS

Member Asking: Mr. Raphael Trotman, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister of Home Affairs

Could the Honourable Minister say-

What is the criteria used for the issuing of Diplomatic Passports by the Government of Guyana?

(Notice Paper No. 467 (Q335 Opp310) published on 2010-06-02)

Answer:

The criteria for the issuing of Diplomatic Passports are State secret.

For Oral Replies

7. PADDY DRYING FLOORS

Mr. Everall Franklin, M.P., asked the Minister of Agriculture the following questions:

1. *Can the Minister inform the National Assembly of the price paid for the paddy drying floor at Anna Regina?
2. *What is the average cost per square meter of drying floors, constructed so far, if all floors have the same thickness? If not, provide the average cubic meter cost?
3. *What mechanism is in place to protect drying paddy from eventual rain?
4. *Is the Minister satisfied that these drying floors can be described as “a value for money” project?

(Notice Paper No. 470 (Q337 Opp312) published on 2010-06-09)

Thereafter the Minister of Agriculture replied.

Mr. Everall Franklin asked the Minister of Agriculture a supplementary question.

Thereafter the Minister of Agriculture replied.

8. **GRADE REPETITION/RETENTION AND AUTOMATIC PROMOTION (AMENDMENT)**

Mr. Everall Franklin, M.P., asked the Minister of Education the following questions:

1. *Can the Hon. Minister explain to this House the intention of Circular No. 8/2009 dated 29th September, 2009, from the Chief Education Officer, to all Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools, among others, with the subject stated as “**Grade Repetition/Retention and Automatic Promotion (Amendment)**”?
2. *Is the policy now, as the Circular suggests in paragraph 2 that, “No repetition shall take place at the Nursery, Primary nor Secondary levels”, irrespective of the performance of students and that promotion to higher grades will be automatic?
3. *Deficiencies noted by teachers according to this Circular must be remedied during the August holidays. How practical is this, when some of these deficiencies were developed over years of formal teaching?
4. *Is it true to say that this policy will be delivering students to subsequent grades, who are below the required standard?

(Notice Paper No. 471 (Q338 Opp313) published on 2010-06-09)

Thereafter the Minister of Education replied.

Mr. Everall Franklin asked the Minister of Education a supplementary question.

9. **EXPORT OF ACTIVATED CARBON/CHARCOAL**

Due to the absence of the Prime Minister, Mr. Everall Franklin requested that the following questions be converted to questions for written answers:

1. *Will the Hon. Prime Minister state what quantity of spent activated charcoal (activated carbon) was exported by Omai Gold Mining Ltd., during the last ten years of its operation here in Guyana?
2. *Please name companies to which the activated carbon/charcoal was sent for regeneration?
3. *Is the Government in possession of any reports of the regeneration process undertaken by these companies?

(Notice Paper No. 473 (Q339 Opp314) published on 2010-06-11)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

1. **Low Carbon Development Strategy and the Establishment of the Guyana Redd+ Investment Fund (GRIF)**

The Minister of Finance made a statement on the Low Carbon Development Strategy and the Establishment of the Guyana Redd + Investment Fund (GRIF)

2. **WOW, a Micro Credit Scheme for Women**

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security made a statement on WOW, a Micro Credit Scheme for Women.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS-

Presentation and First Readings

1. **PROCUREMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2010 – Bill No. 6 /2010**

The Minister of Finance, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Procurement Act 2003.

2. **NEW BUILDING SOCIETY (AMENDMENT) BILL 2010 – Bill No. 7/2010**

The Minister of Finance, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the New Building Society Act.

(iii)COMMITTEES BUSINESS

MOTIONS

ITEM 1 - ADOPTION OF THE NINTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS IN RELATION TO THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Ms Gail Teixeira, M.P.(Chairperson of the Committee on Appointments) moved the following motion:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly adopts the Ninth Report of the Standing Committee to address matters relating to the appointment of Members of Commissions established under the Constitution, and signify to the President that the following persons:

16.

Mr. Carvil Duncan
and
Mr. Cecil Seepersaud

have been nominated in accordance with Article 200(1)(b) of the Constitution, be appointed Members of the Public Service Commission.

(Notice Paper No. 472 (M136 PPP/C 16) published on 2010-06-11)

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Mrs. Deborah Backer
The Minister of Health
Mrs. Sheila Holder

Thereafter Ms Gail Teixeira replied.

The motion was then put and carried.

**ITEM 2 - ADOPTION OF THE FIFTH PERIODIC REPORT OF THE
PARLIAMENTARY SECTORAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC
SERVICES**

Ms Gail Teixeira, M.P. (Chairperson of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services) moved the following motion:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly adopts the Fifth Periodic Report of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services and refer the Report to the Government for consideration.

(Notice Paper No. 476 (M138 PPP/C 17) published on 2010-07-08)

17.

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Mr. Winston Murray

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj

Thereafter, Ms Gail Teixeira replied.

The motion was then put and carried.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4.46 p.m., on a motion by the Minister of Home Affairs, the Assembly was adjourned to 2.00 p.m., on Thursday, 22nd July, 2010.

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HON. HARI N. RAMKARRAN, S.C., M.P.,
Speaker of the National Assembly

PARLIAMENT OFFICE,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

15th July, 2010.